DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 160 673 UD 018 487

AUTHOR Stickney, Benjamin D.
TITLE Boarding Schools: An Alternative Educational Experience for Disadvantaged Children.
PUB DATE May 77
NOTE 15p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Achievement Gains; *Boarding Schools; *Compensatory Education Programs; *Educational Alternatives; *Educationally Disadvantaged; Elementary Secondary Education; Minority Group Children
IDENTIFIERS *Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews some of the research on compensatory education in the United States and points out that these programs have had little measurable effect on increasing the mean achievement growth rate of the participants, relative to the growth rate of most middle class children. The author recalls his own experiences with boarding school students in rural Nigeria. Initially, these students had been barely literate but the boarding school experience brought about impressive changes in their cognitive skills. A review of residential schooling in Europe and the U.S. indicates that many of the privileged in the society have enjoyed the alternative of boarding schools while the poor have not had this option. In light of the apparent success that boarding schools have had for many years in the education of the privileged and more recently in countries like Nigeria in the education of the disadvantaged, this paper suggests that educators in the U.S. begin giving serious attention to boarding schools as one possible strategy to promote a greater equalization of academic achievement. (Author/AM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED160673

BOARDING SCHOOLS: AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

Benjamin D. Stickney
Assistant Professor
of Education & Psychology
Springfield College

May 1977

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Benjamin D. Stickney

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

CG01S487

Boarding Schools: An Alternative Educational Experience for Disadvantaged Children

Abstract

It is suggested in this paper that educators give serious thought to boarding schools to help reduce the cumulative achievement deficit between most middle class and lower class children in the United States. The author recalls his own experience with boarding schools in Nigeria, reviews the ineffectiveness of compensatory education in America, and summarizes the history of residential schooling in Europe and North America. It is pointed out that many of the privileged in this society have long enjoyed the alternative of boarding schools while the only residential institutions available to most of the poor are the armed forces and the public jails.

AUG 2 7 1978

INTRODUCTION

As a teacher in the Peace Corps in the early 1960's, this writer was a witness to impressive changes in the cognitive skills of secondary boarding school pupils in rural Nigeria. Typically, when these students entered secondary schools in their early teens, they were barely literate and were even unaware that the earth is a sphere. At the conclusion of their secondary schooling some five years later, however, the majority of these Nigerian children passed the West African School Certificate Examination (W.A.S.C.), a sophisticated battery of tests from England that measured proficiency, based on British norms, in such areas as English Literature, Algebra, history, and physics. This author left Nigeria with the impression that most Nigerian pupils upon completing the W.A.S.C. had surpassed the average American high school graduate in academic achievement and with the belief that proper schooling was capable of compensating for the environmentally determined differences in the measured cognitive growth of various cultural and socio-economic groups.

Following the Nigerian experience, this writer spent several years teaching in American urban schools in compensatory education programs for children from low income families. Despite the many changes in methodology and curriculum, it soon became obvious that these

programs were having little measurable effect on increasing the mean achievement growth rate of the participants relative to the growth rate of most middle class children.

Because of these cross cultural experiences and a recognition of the disappointing results of the evaluations of many other compensatory education programs, a question that has often come to mind is why schooling was so effective in accelerating the achievement of Nigerian children and so ineffective in producing similar results with most underachievers in the United States. Possible explanations may involve the relative absence of a "culture of poverty" and racism in West Africa, the greater tangible rewards afforded Nigerian children following secondary school graduation, the fact tnat Nigerian secondary schooling is not universal and the effect this situation may have on genetic selection, and the reality that the passage of the W.A.S.C. offered a long-term competency based academic goal. But perhaps the most important explanation for the superior achievement growth rate in Nigeria is that the vast majority of the Nigerian secondary school pupils lived at the schools they attended. Residential schooling permitted Nigerian educators to have a substantially greater influence on the cognitive growth of children outside the classroom than teachers normally have in the United States.

In this article, the writer will review some of the research on compensatory education in America followed by an historical summary of the role that boarding schools have played in many other societies. The paper will conclude by glancing at the current status of boarding

schools in the United States and suggesting that some form of residential schooling be made available for children from low income families.

The Evaluation of Compensatory Education

With one exception, the major national evaluations* of compensatory education and the effects of schooling on achievement published in the latter half of the 1960's suggested that neither "enrichment programs" nor more conventional instructional approaches were doing much, if anything, to narrow the mean cumulative deficit in achievement between low class and middle class children.[1] A glance at the findings of the one evaluation that did offer some optimism, at least initially, should give the reader a "feel" for the arduous tasks confronting educators in their efforts to compensate for the totality of a child's social milieu in a six hour school day.

Since most of the national studies attempted to measure the impact of diversified instructional methods on a large heterogeneous population, it was conceivable that significant gains produced by appropriate instruction for some children were being neutralized by the insignificant and even negative effects of inappropriate instruction for other children. Public education in the 1960's was often characterized by a rather exciting array of innovation and experimentation. Consequently,

*Equality of Educational Opportunity Survey, by James Coleman, et al, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966; Racial Isolation in the Public Schools, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967; Education of the Disadvantaged: An Evaluative Report on Title I, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Fiscal Year 1968, U.S. Office of Education, April, 1960; Data Analysis of the 1968-1969 Survey of Compensatory Education, (Title I), Gene Glass, (printed but apparently never made available for public reading by the U. S. Office of Education).

a lumping together of achievement data from compensatory enrichment programs that were beneficial for some, meaningless for most and even detrimental for others produced what may be called a "canceling effect" that distorted the real effectiveness of some schooling. Accordingly, a logical alternative strategy employed by the Office of Education for assessing the effectiveness of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (E.S.E.A.) was to search the country for exemplary educational programs. Once identified, these programs would prove compensatory education could work and would serve as models.[2]

In 1967 the Office of Education commissioned the American Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (A.I.R.) in Palo Alto, California, to begin an extensive search for Title I programs that were producing greater than a month of learning for a month of instruction achievement gains.[3] Following A.I.R.'s 1968 and 1969 publications of its findings,[4] the Office of Education was encouraged enough by the results to release a pamphlet in 1970 entitled the It Works Series, which described each of the exemplary programs from pre-school through secondary school identified by A.I.R.[5] Although A.I.R. had found only 31 successful programs out of over 2,000 reviewed, the Institute had been able to state what other investigators could not: Somewhere, somehow, something seemed to be working.[6]

The optimism associated with the first two A.I.R. reports subsided considerably following its third and final published search for exemplary programs.[7] Released in 1971, this report did identify ten additional successful programs (making a total of 41 exemplary programs in the three studies), but it also included a follow-up study of model programs

selected in the earlier publications. At the elementary and secondary school level only 6 of the original 21 had continued to produce educationally significant gains (1:1 or greater).* At the pre-school level a higher percentage (3 of 10) continued their success, but by 1971 these results were hardly impressive.[8] Recent evaluations of Head Start and associated early childhood programs had revealed impressive initial gains in I.Q. followed by an almost complete fading out, usually by the end of the second grade.[9]

It would be unfair to suggest that only 6 of the more than 3,000 programs reviewed by A.I.R. in the three studies were really successful for more than a single observation, for the rather rigid criteria demanded by the Institute forced A.I.R. to dismiss a majority of the programs for lack of adequate "hard" data.[10] Indeed, only 11 of the 21 original

---

*A.I.R.'s criteria for a successful program was greater than 1:1. But in the 1971 follow-up report an exemplary program could also be "moderately successful" with achievement gains at but no greater than 1:1.

The six A.I.R. programs that enjoyed continual success were Intensive Reading Instructional Teams, Hartford, Conn.; Programmed Tutorial Reading Program, Indianapolis, Indiana; Project R-3, San José, California; After School Study Centers, New York, N.Y.; Summer Junior High, New York, N.Y.; and College Bound Program, New York, N.Y.

It is interesting to note that the last 3 of the 6 listed programs work with pupils beyond the regular schooling period. In the case of College Bound, an eleven month program, A.I.R. judged it successful only during the summer. Conceivably, motivational effects stemming from the home are partly responsible for the success of these New York projects.

Intensive Reading Instructional Teams and Programmed Tutorial Reading are highly structured 1st grade programs with impressive achievement gains. There is some evidence, however, that this approach in the 1st grade is no more likely to have a sustaining effect on achievement than have the numerous highly structured pre-school programs that have reported a fading-out of initial gains. Through private communication with one of the founders of Programmed Tutorial Reading, Douglas G. Ellson of Indiana University, this writer obtained a copy of an unpublished four-year follow-up study of the program (D.G. Ellson, "The Effect of Programmed Tutoring in Reading On Assignment to Special Education Classes: A Follow-up of Four Years of Tutoring in the First Grade," Indiana University, July, 1971). According to Ellson "... four years later the differences between children who were tutored and those who were not had disappeared." (p. 28)

exemplary elementary and secondary programs could provide useful data in A.I.R.'s follow-up study.[11] It is difficult to escape the impression, however, that if a sizeable percentage of disadvantaged children in America were actually benefiting cognitively from enrichment programs, far more than 6 would have been able to provide A.I.R. with adequate data for more than a single year.

Before we give up on the public day schools' ability to compensate for the exigencies of economic poverty, it should be pointed out that the very few exemplary programs identified by A.I.R. tended to be well structured with specific cognitive objectives and that such prescriptive programs seem to be extremely atypical of Title I projects. In the 1970's the Center for Educational Policy Research at Harvard[12] and the RMC Research Corporation[13] have produced some evidence suggesting that certain well-structured programs may permit disadvantaged children to keep pace with their more affluent peers for a short period. Therefore, if a significantly greater percentage of compensatory educators adopt the more structured cognitive models and deemphasize the more affective "whole child" approaches, we may find greater evidence that the schools are arresting the cumulative deficit.

At the moment, however, the disappointing final chapter of the initially encouraging A.I.R. Research Series serves to underscore our need to give some serious attention to alternatives to the present structure of American education to reduce the progressive achievement gap between most middle and low income children. It is important for educators to pay closer attention to Christopher Jencks' contention

that as long as the schools in our society continue as "marginal institutions," progress toward any significant reduction in the inequality of educational achievement is likely to be "glacial."[14] Most of the research on schooling in our pluralistic society seems to suggest that any significant reduction in the inequities in achievement which can be attributed to environmental conditions will depend upon the extent to which we reduce the inequities of these environmental conditions. Jencks' socialist remedy, suggested in Inequality, is largely a political alternative. Constructing boarding schools which have a profound influence on the social milieu of poverty stricken children provides a greater educational alternative and should deserve our closer attention.

Boarding Schools

Traditionally most boarding schools have been institutions for the privileged. During antiquity children of wealthy Egyptians of the New Empire were frequently educated away from home beginning at age five in either the royal palace or a government department in preparation for careers as state officials.[15] In Sparta those children who were physically fit were taken from their families at age seven and trained in military camps until they were eighteen and ready to take up the sword.[16] During the Middle Ages in Europe, children of the well to do, destined to serve at court, would take up residence and be educated at the lord's household,[17] and Christian parents of means who wished their children free from the influence of a pagan world offered their children to the monastery.[18] In the later Middle Ages (12th, 13th and 14th centuries) the castle served those prominent nobles who felt

that residence at the court from the age of seven to maturity would provide superior education for their children.[19] During the Renaissance and Enlightenment, resident schools were often associated with many of the leading educators of Europe from the Vittorino da Feltre court schools of Italy in the middle 15th century[20] to Swiss born Heinrich Pestalotzi's experimental boarding schools of the early 19th century which attracted scholars from all over Europe and influenced education throughout much of the Western world.[21]

In England and the United States boarding schools continued to serve the well to do. Throughout the nineteenth century and up to and including today, the elite in Great Britain have generally been products of preparatory primary schools and the public secondary schools, both of which are largely boarding institutions. In this country the first secondary schools, the Latin Grammar schools of the 17th century, boarded the sons of the privileged from ages 8 to 18.[22] Shortly after 1750 the Latin Grammar schools began to give way to the newly founded academies, which by 1850 were offering a more practical curriculum to over 250,000 students in over 6,000 institutions throughout New England, the middle Atlantic states, the South and the Upper Mississippi Valley.[23] In the early twentieth century boarding school enrollment began a dramatic decline. Still, in 1973 Porter Sargent's The Handbook of Schools[24] listed nearly 300 independent boarding schools in the United States, most of which are rather expensive and, like most of their counterparts throughout American history, are reserved for people of considerable means. It is this author's opinion that it is extremely

unfortunate in the United States that boarding schools are still available for the well to do, while the only residential institutions available for most of the poor are the armed forces and the public jails.

In this country we should offer many poverty-stricken people public residential educational alternatives to the ineffective day school. It would seem that in order for boarding schools to be successful in any substantial reduction of the achievement deficit, they would have to create an environment that permits children to become imbued in the cognitive processes of the dominant American culture. Inevitably, this procedure would undermine many of the social norms and habitual practices of the sub-cultures of poverty. In order to prevent cultural genocide it would be important that representatives of the various sub-cultures have control over the design of the residential environment. Accordingly, these persons could include in the boarding school atmosphere both the critical cognitive environmental variables characteristic of the dominant culture and many of the environmental processes from the children's sub-cultural background. For example, the boarding schools might want to employ staff members who can address many children in both standard American English and black English vernacular. Similarly, the books, periodicals and educational games that may be available would not have to mirror similar artifacts in typical middle class homes, but reflect much of the cultural heritage of a specific minority group. Of course, if parents for some reason did not like the environmental design of the boarding schools they would simply choose not to enrole their children.

Today in other parts of the world some governments are offering residential alternatives to segments of the population traditionally excluded from boarding schools. Boarding schools in the Soviet Union for children of "difficult character educability" have been available for some time.[24] Israeli experimentation with residential education on the kibbutz is well known. In addition, boarding schools are common not only in Nigeria but throughout much of sub-sahara Africa.

In light of the apparent success that boarding schools have had for many years in the education of the privileged and more recently in countries like Nigeria in the education of the less fortunate, it is important for educators in this country -- bewildered as so many are by the apparent failure of the daily schools to redress the exengencies of economic deprivation -- to begin giving serious attention to boarding schools as one possible strategy to promote a greater equalization of academic achievement.

REFERENCES

[1]MC LAUGHLIN, M.W., Evaluation and Reform: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Title I, San Monica, California: The Rand Corporation (1974).

[2]Ibid

[3]Ibid

[4]HAWKRIDGE, D.G., et al., A Study of Selected Exemplary Programs for the Education of Disadvantaged Children, Part I, Palo Alto, California: American Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, (published in ERIC) (September, 1968) ED 023 776; Part II (June, 1969) ED 036 668.

[5] IT WORKS SERIES: SUMMARIES OF SELECTED COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROJECTS, U.S. Office of Education, U.S. Government Printing Office (1970).

[6]HAWKRIDGE, op. cit.

[7]WARGO, M.J., et al., Further Examination of Exemplary Programs for Educating Disadvantaged Children, American Institute on Research in the Behavioral Sciences, Los Angeles, California (published in ERIC) (July, 1971) ED 055 128.

[8]Ibid

[9]THE IMPACT OF HEAD START: AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF HEAD START ON CHILDREN'S COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT, Ohio University, Athens; Westinghouse Learning Corporation, New York, New York (published in ERIC) (January, 1969) ED 036 321.

[10]WARGO, op. cit.

[11]Ibid

[12]MC LAUGHLIN, M., et al., The Effects of Title I, ESEA: An Exploratory Study, Center for Educational Policy Research, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (published in ERIC) (December 30, 1971) ED 073 216.

[13]FOAT, C.M., Selecting Exemplary Compensatory Education Programs for Dissemination Via Project Information Package, RMC Research Corporation, Los Altos, California (published in ERIC) (August, 1974) ED 099 456.

[14]JENCKS, C., et al., Inequality, New York: Harper and Row (1972).

[15]ERMAN, A., Life in Ancient Egypt, London: Macmillan and Company (1894), 164.

[16]BOYD, W., The History of Western Education, New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc. (1966), 10-15.

[17]ADAMSON, J.W., A Short History of Education, Cambridge: The University Press (1922), 51-52.

[18]FROST, S.E., Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Western Education, Columbus: Merrill Book, Inc.(1966),.115.

[19]ADAMSON, op. cit., 51-52.

[20]BURCKHARDT, J., The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy, Albert and Charles Boni (1935), 220.

[21]MEYER, A.E., An Educational History of the Western World, New York: McGraw Hill Book Co. (1965), 350-51.

[22]GROSS, R.E., Heritage of American Education, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc. (1962), 240-41.

[23]CUBBERLY, E.P., Public Education in the United States, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company (1919).

[24]SARGENT, P., The Handbook of Private Schools, Boston: Porter Sargant Publishers (1973).